

**Land North of Top Road, Sharpthorne, West Sussex  
West Hoathly Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2031  
Site Assessment Reference 148 (ST/01)  
Response to Parish Council Questions**

**What is the overall concept of the proposed housing development?**

As a local development company it is in Whitehall Homes' long term interest to respect local needs, visual amenity and provide a high quality development that we and local people can be proud of. Previous developments by Whitehall Homes have been designed and constructed in a manner that respects and enhances the local vicinity and has created good working relationships with the local town and parish council in that process.

This proposal is no different and it is our intention to work alongside the Parish Council to deliver the different elements of this housing development.

Local vernacular will form a key factor in the design concept which is predominantly Victorian inspired, implementing local finishes such as West Hoathly and Sharpthorne local stock facing brick and red clay roof tiles. Each dwelling will benefit from its own garden of modest proportion and an off street driveway and garage. The dwellings will be constructed to a high standard of sustainable design to meet the District Council's requirements.

The existing hedgerow and trees form an important role in privacy and screening the street scene and housing to the west. Wherever possible, these will be retained and enhanced with further native species planting for minimum impact on the street scene. The countryside view from the North is screened by an existing tree belt to the north boundary that will be strengthened with new planting to create a long term defensible boundary to the countryside and ensure the development is even further integrated into the landscape.

**What numbers and types of dwellings does the housing development propose?**

The proposed housing will follow a traditional style of two storey, single and double ridge pitched roofs. There will be a variety of designs used all within the local vernacular. These will be designs that are unique to the site rather than the standard designs that are often produced by the volume housebuilders. They would be designed by a local chartered architect with a strong track record of work in the local area.

The proposal offers provision from a minimum of 23 houses to a maximum of 30 houses as follows:

House Type	Minimum	Maximum	
2 Bedroom House	4	6	Affordable Housing
3 Bedroom House	8	10	
3 Bedroom House	2	3	Affordable Housing
4 Bedroom House	9	11	
Total Market Housing	17	21	
Total Affordable Housing	6	9	

The developer hopes to work alongside the Parish Council to see that the allocation of affordable homes are reserved solely for local need whether by social rented or equity share in perpetuity.

This housing development also takes into account the local requirement for family starter homes with a large portion of 3 bed houses. The local need for elderly homes will be catered for by implementing Lifetime Homes standards within many of the new dwellings which incorporates easy accessibility from the driveway and the ground floor, internal wheel chair provisions, stairlift and tracking provisions to ensure comfort of use to the elderly.

### **What is the timescale/phasing of the proposed development?**

This housing development site is unencumbered with no significant site preparation costs or requirements for land assembly and with access direct from the public highway. It is therefore available for development in the 0 – 5 year timescale.

Whitehall Homes is offering development timescales to a suitable schedule in coordination with the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Highways issues are very important to local residents so what are the access arrangements?**

Highway safety for both vehicle and pedestrian traffic is of paramount importance within these proposals. The existing use of Top Road as a through road for non-local traffic has been noted and is a factor in the initial scheme design. The access would be re-positioned to improve its safety and constructed to the standard required by the highway authority to allow uninterrupted views from West to East along Top Road for vehicles exiting the development. Where required, the existing hedgerow fronting onto Top Road may need to

be removed to accommodate the required visibility splay. A new replacement hedge will be planted behind the splay to maintain the existing character and continuity of this important feature. Planning conditions are typically attached to these exit splays to ensure their long term maintenance and preservation.

By adopting this approach, the site access will not be directly through established residential areas and the relocation of the access further east will move traffic further away from the village. Traffic calming measures on Top Road, such as the extension of the 30 mph zone further east could be funded as part of the development.

Whitehall Homes intends to liaise with the Parish Council to ensure Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds are channelled into the Neighbourhood Plan local highways scheme.

### **What will the proposed development give back to the local community?**

This housing development is of the right scale to generate a substantial financial contribution known as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Should the Parish Council adopt this housing development within its Neighbourhood Plan, 25% of the CIL generated from this site will be given to the Parish Council. These funds can be put towards a multitude of needs such as enhancements to local community buildings and outdoor recreational facilities.

In the case of the amount retained by the District Council, Whitehall Homes intends to liaise with the Parish Council to ensure that the highways allocation is channelled toward traffic calming measures as drafted in the Neighbourhood Plan. This would go some way to encourage County Highways to deliver the much needed improvements that have been identified.

It should be noted that smaller sites will not be required to provide the same level of CIL and sites that utilise existing floor areas or promote higher levels of affordable housing will also contribute a reduced amount of CIL. Affordable exception sites are also given a CIL relaxation.

As outlined before, this development will provide on-site affordable housing, family starter homes and elderly homes as required by the Parish Council and District Council.

### **What are the unique benefits of this housing development proposal that others lack?**

This site was previously assessed within the District Council SHLAA review which concluded that it already has strong defensible boundaries that give a sense of enclosure to much of the site. In turn, these defensible boundaries minimise views from the surrounding countryside towards the land – reducing the impact of its development on the surrounding landscape. There is therefore less of a need for landscape mitigation as part of the development of this site although Whitehall Homes is committing to strengthening the existing landscaped boundaries to enhance the quality of development still further.

It is important to consider the existing clay brick extraction to the north of the site that has to some degree blighted this area. Planning permission exists for further extraction towards the site's boundary followed by site restoration. In this context, development of this site would again be the least harmful option to the AONB location. These works will not affect the site in terms of construction programme and Whitehall Homes have been in contact with Istock who have confirmed extraction will only occur on 6-8 weeks each year as a maximum and have agreed to reduce this as soon as possible with full restoration of the land following including comprehensive tree planting.

Existing planting on the north boundary of the site will be retained during the clay extraction works and will then be strengthened through the introduction of a greater density of tree planting during the site restoration works. Whitehall Homes will monitor this closely to ensure this occurs. The existing planting to the east and west of the land will also be untouched by the clay extraction works.

Unlike alternative land submitted for consideration, the site itself is an open field. No trees or woodland will need to be removed to accommodate the development with a consequentially more limited impact on local ecology expected. It is relatively flat and therefore no significant excavation works or re-profiling of the land is necessary as part of the development.

The proposals would re-position the existing access to the development further to the east. The required geometry for this access can be achieved to ensure it is safe and there is the added advantage that the access will not need to pass through established residential areas. Indeed, it will be directly onto Top Road, ensuring that not all traffic from the development will need to pass through Sharpthorne.

The land is in single ownership, avoiding the need for complicated and time consuming land assembly.

The development as presented takes into account the required financial contributions through the CIL, requirement for affordable housing and requirement for smaller house sizes – providing benefits for the local community and addressing local needs. The developer is confident that the scheme is realistic and honest in the range of benefits that are being offered whilst still ensuring it is viable to avoid an unsatisfactory renegotiation of terms with the Parish Council in the future once allocation is secured.